

What to Do: If your dog is becoming **REACTIVE**



With any problem behavior the most important step is PREVENTION. Dogs become better at the behaviors they are allowed to practice, and then it becomes harder to get rid of it.

If you notice your dog is starting to become reactive, it is important to identify what your dog is reacting at so you can deal with it. The best way to deal with reactive dogs is to interrupt the behavior, engage the dog in an alternate behavior, and then manage the behavior so he does not continue to practice the reactive behavior. Asking your dog for commands while having extra yummy treats on you is one way to interrupt your dog when he starts displaying the beginning stages of reactivity. The key is to distract your dog before it begins reacting. Then engage the dog in an alternate behavior - ask for sits, touches, or just free feed your dog (feeding helps the brain produce serotonin – which helps calm your dog). If your dog begins to react the best thing to do is to move your dog away from the situation. Anti-pull walking aids such as the Gentle Leader are a great way to manage your dog's behavior, as well as giving you better control of your dog.

For example, your dog reacts at other dogs while on its daily walk. You could ask friends with dogs to help you with this, and stage a walk-by so that you are prepared. Make sure whenever you go on a walk you have super yummy treats your dog just can't resist. While you are walking make sure to pay attention to what is going on so you can spot another dog before your dog begins to react. If you see another dog walking towards you start asking your dog for commands and reward him/her for obeying. Watch me, touch, sits and downs are good commands to distract your dog. These are easy behaviors but requires them to be listening to you and watching you. Continue to ask for behaviors as the other dog walks by. If at any moment your dog begins to react, walk back from the direction you came, away from the other dog, at a brisk pace saying things like "let go" or "here we go", etc in a happy positive way (this is where it'd be helpful to have a friend with a dog. When your dog starts to react your friend can stop while you try to refocus your dog). Reward your dog for walking with you and not reacting. When you feel you have your dogs attention, turn back towards the other dog, trying your best to keep your dogs attention on you and not on the other dog.

You want to keep the entire interaction with the other dog as positive as you can. If you scold your dog, get frustrated, or use physical corrections, it adds to the level of anxiety your dog will feel in that situation. With reactive dogs, it may be in your dogs best interest to consult a trainer sooner rather than later so you can get rid of the behavior before it gets worse. Reactive dogs can become aggressive if not dealt with properly. The staff at The Good Dog Spot is prepared to offer you suggestions and to recommend a trainer.

