



10 Tips for Addressing Aggression

How to Begin Directly Addressing Aggression

Overview:

Aggressive behaviors can be scary and overwhelming - for both you, your dog, and the victim of the aggression!

However, they can often be improved or fixed entirely!

The key to changing aggressive behavior is changing your dog's emotional response in the situation.

Behavior does not happen in a vacuum. Emotion and environmental factors create fuel, and as the fuel builds up, all it takes is the right match to spark an explosion. Therefore, addressing your dog's emotions that underlie the behavior is *crucial*.

As you do that, you'll be able to address the behaviors more directly.

Once you start working with the things that trigger aggressive responses in your dog, **there are some basic concepts that can increase your chances of success.** Read on to learn more!

One final note:

When you're dealing with severe behaviors, the stakes can be high. It's best to work with a qualified professional so that you have the guidance you need to help your dog -- while keeping everyone involved safe and happy.

Horizon Dog Training specializes in helping dogs suffering from aggression, fear, and anxiety. Learn more at www.horizondogs.com.

10 Tips to Work Directly With Aggressive Behaviors:

Implement these 10 strategies for greater success changing aggressive behaviors.

- **#1: Watch for signs of stress, and take action early.** Ears flicking backwards, lip-licking and mouth movements, yawning, sniffing, and tension in the shoulder and facial muscles are all early signs that fear is mounting. Intervene early; don't wait until full aggression is triggered.
- **#2: Find your dog's *critical distance*.** This refers to the distance the triggering thing (like a strange person or dog) can get before the dog begins to show signs of stress.
- **#3: Work at getting the dog accustomed to triggers right behind that line.** If you move the dog too close, you will heighten the stress and increase the fear response. Your dog won't be able to learn because their "thinking" brain will shut down and they will be in a reactive, emotional mode. As the dog improves, you'll be able to move closer.
- **#4: Use rewards, and make them good!** If they aren't motivational to your dog, they won't give you as much mileage.
- **#5: Training for attention, trust, and connection is highly valuable.** If you can't easily connect with your dog in normal circumstances, you won't be able to address more severe situations. Strengthening the basics pays off.
- **#6: Don't ask your dog to sit or to "watch you" while the trigger passes.** This can work as management in tight situations, but won't actually help your dog learn to feel and respond differently in the situation.
- **#7: Keep training sessions short.** Long training sessions can be exhausting and stressful for both you and your dog, and this can make behaviors worse.
- **#8: Keep the leash loose.** It's tempting to tighten up, but tension on the leash can trigger outbursts. Work far enough away from the trigger that your dog isn't exploding and you won't need such a tight leash.
- **#9: Stop while you're ahead.** Do not move too quickly or push the dog too hard. This can destroy any progress you've made. When in doubt, err on the side of caution.
- **#10: Give your dog space and time to process.** Don't overwhelm your dog with too many commands or too much talking. It's good to talk to your dog and reassure them, but give them an opportunity to think things through as well.