

Reactive Dog

Working Towards Manageable Walks

Cool Down



CHILL OUT!!

Implement a Cool Down Period, starting today. This Cool Down period should last at least three days from today and should be re-implemented each and every time your dog has a reactive incident.

During this time, we must eliminate the possibility that the dog will see and react to his trigger (another dog, a child, man in hat, skateboarder, special person in the home, etc). We need to prevent the dog from suffering the stress associated with the triggers. There will be no more reactive incidents because of your management is protecting your dog from his fear triggers. This helps wash the chronically present stress hormones out of his body.



ACTIVITIES DURING COOL-DOWN

- You may have been instructed to do specific exercises during this trigger free period. Please refer to your consultation notes and supplemental handouts.
- Read all notes and other handouts supplied by your instructor, including about toys and food as rewards. Please limit or avoid using the food bowl but feed your dog his daily ration by hand throughout the day for counter-conditioning, general training and mental stimulation.
- If you have been advised to use new equipment (for example head collar, harness, muzzle, Calming Cap, Thundershirt, etc), do systematic desensitization and counter-conditioning exercises as instructed for this new equipment to help your dog be *happy about the new equipment*.
- No contact with triggers on walks.
- Plan walks accordingly.
 - Walk your dog when he is hungry, and take his food with you during the walk to use for good behaviours, such as any time he walks on a loose leash, checks in with you, etc.
 - Drive to a 'safe' place where you can avoid meeting triggers.
 - Utilize places where you can not be surprised by a trigger.
 - If surprised at a distance, distract your dog with food, turn around and go the other way, feeding your dog as you both happily go in the new direction.
 - Loose leash walking is critical.
 - No off-leash time (for safety).
- Option: Eliminate walks during the cool-down period and exercise your dog in a different way.
- No contact with triggers from car or house windows:
 - Pull drapes, close blinds, rearrange furniture, close doors.
 - Auto travel in a crate covered with a towel, if necessary, or leashed to floor of car (with harness, not collar).
- Plan locations for your first walks. You might have to drive to these locations. Avoid areas frequented by off leash dogs, joggers, or whatever your dog's triggers are. Find places where there are minimal opportunities to encounter the trigger, where you can see the trigger coming from a distance, where there are places to depart from your path of travel and go in a different direction. Avoid places where you can be "cornered"
- Report progress to your instructor at the end of the Cool Down period.
- Consider talking to your veterinarian about anti-anxiety medication (see separate handout).

AFTER THE COOL DOWN PERIOD AND BEFORE YOUR FIRST WALK

- ☑ Make sure she's hungry! (Take her next meal with you on your walk.)
- ☑ Exercise your dog at home, play fetch, tug of war, to get her first bout of energy out of the way before you go for your first walk.
- ☑ Then calm down again for 20 minutes before your walk.
- ☑ Be calm as you depart.
- ☑ Use a regular leash, not a flexi.
- ☑ Practice loose leash walking, using the food generously.



DURING YOUR WALK

Let your dog meander and sniff as much as possible, while you follow your dog around on a loose leash. Use the food rewards generously.

If you are surprised by a trigger at a distance, distract your dog with food, turn around cheerfully and go the other way, feeding your dog as she quietly goes in the new direction.

You should be able to keep your dog under threshold for reaction, **but keep up your vigilance**. Do not let your good planning and your dog's good behaviour lull you into complacency. Don't push your luck. Remain vigilant. The more walks you take now without an "episode", the better your long-term success will be.

By keeping the dog as stress-free as possible, she will be better set up for the controlled desensitization and counter-conditioning (DS&CC) that we will be practicing.

