

What does reactive mean?

It means that your dog lunges and barks when he sees other dogs. He may do this because he had a bad experience with a dog in the past, because he wasn't properly socialized to other dogs during puppyhood, or because he enjoys playing and greeting so much that he becomes intensely frustrated when he is restrained.

What should I do when my dog gets reactive?

- **Do a U-Turn.** It is best to do a U-turn and move your dog away from the other dog. If possible, initiate your U-turn as soon as you see the other dog rather than waiting for your dog to react. Use a happy voice to encourage your dog to turn with you.
- **Avoid scolding.** Scolding runs the risk of creating an even more negative situation for your already stressed dog and you could accidentally make his reactivity problem worse. After all, if the sight of another dog results in an angry/scary/scolding owner, the next time your dog sees another dog, he has reason to be even more afraid, and may growl and bark more!

How do I train my dog not to be reactive?

- **Preparation for training.** You will need high value treats like hot dogs or freeze-dried liver. You will also need a clicker (available at most dog stores; makes a CLICK noise when you press it) or a marker word (like "Good!").
- **Level 1: Reward Engagement.** Determine a SAFE distance to start – this should be a distance at which your dog is not reacting. Allow your dog to notice the other dog on his own. As soon as your dog ENGAGES by looking at the other dog, CLICK! (or say "Good!"). When your dog turns his head towards you after the click, feed a treat. If your dog reacts or is not turning back to you after the click, move further away from the other dog to reset at an easier distance. Do at least 3-5 successful repetitions in a row at the same distance before moving on to level 2. A successful repetition is when your dog immediately turns back to you after the click.
- **Level 2: Reward Disengagement.** Let your dog notice the other dog again, but now wait 1-5 seconds to see if your dog will offer to look at you on his own. (If your dog is fixating on the other dog for longer than 5 seconds, go back to Level 1). As soon as your dog DISENGAGES by looking away from the other dog, CLICK! (or say "Good!"). After the click, feed a treat. If your dog reacts or is not turning back to you after the click, move further away from the other dog to reset at an easier distance. Do at least 3-5 successful repetitions in a row before walking 1-5 steps closer to the other dog. A successful repetition is when your dog disengages with the other dog on his own.

What are some general recommendations for reactivity?

- **Change when & where you walk.** Take your dog for a walk late at night and try to avoid areas that are highly populated with dogs.
- **Exercise your dog at home.** Play fetch, tug or hide & seek in a fenced-in backyard.
- **Brain games.** Feed him out of a Kibble Nibble, KONG or other puzzle toy.
- **Equipment.** A head halter will give you more control of your dog's head so you can more easily do a U-turn. You can also try vision obscuring products, such as a Calming Cap or Doggles.
- **Hire a professional.** A Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (<http://certifiedanimalbehaviorist.com/>) or qualified Certified Professional Dog Trainer (<http://www.ccpdt.org/>) can help you treat your dog's reactivity through specific protocol work.
- **Read up!** Check out "Feisty Fido" by Patricia McConnell.