

Reactive: HUH?!

- Reactivity means your dog may lunge and bark when he sees other dogs or unfamiliar humans.
- Reasons could include a negative experience with a dog or human in the past, inadequate socialization as a younger pup, or he enjoys playing and greeting so much that he becomes intensely frustrated when he is restrained.

An Ounce of Prevention

- **Introduce & practice U-Turns.** Avoid troubling situations as much as possible! In order to do so, you should consider practicing a U-turn. As soon as you spy a trigger (other dog or human), immediately turn in the opposite direction; you may want to call your dog in an excited voice as you do so. Move quickly out of sight!
- **Avoid scolding and consoling.** Scolding runs the risk of creating a negative situation for your already stressed dog. Consoling is usually ineffective, and may cause an increase in this behavior.
- **Start training!** Plan to use a marker word (verbal cue such as “Good!”) or a clicker (available at most dog stores; makes a CLICK noise when you press it) and high value treats like hot dogs, cooked chicken, or freeze-dried liver. To charge either up, say, “Good!” (or CLICK) followed by a treat (repeat numerous times).
 - **Reinforce 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 “Good!” When your dog turns his head towards you, 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 (disengagement). Success is your dog immediately turning back to you after the click.
 - **Reinforce disengagement.** Let your dog notice the other dog again, but wait 1-5 seconds to see if your dog will offer to look at you on his own. As soon as your dog DISENGAGES by looking away from the other dog, CLICK! (or “Good!”). After the click, feed a treat. If your dog reacts or is not turning back to you, move farther away 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. Success is your dog disengaging with the other dog on his own.

General Recommendations

- **Change when & where you walk.** Avoid days and locations that are highly populated with your dog’s trigger(s).
- **Exercise your dog at home.** Play fetch, tug, or hide & seek in a fenced-in backyard. Have you heard of a flirt pole (<http://youtu.be/RyRDT35zBHA>)?
- **Brain games.** There are so many puzzle toy options for dispensing food / treats! Get that mind working!
- **Equipment.** A properly fitted head halter will give you more control of your dog’s head. You can also try vision reducing products, such as Premier’s Calming Cap™ (www.premier.com) and Doggles® (www.doggles.com).
- **Hire a professional.** A Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (<https://www.animalbehaviorsociety.org/web/applied-behavior-caab-directory.php>) or qualified Certified Professional Dog Trainer (<http://www.ccpdt.org/>) can help you treat your dog’s reactivity through specific protocol work. This should only be done by, or under the guidance of, a professional because a strong grasp of dog body language, learning theory, and timing is necessary to safely and effectively work through the protocol.
- **Read up!** Check out “Feisty Fido” by Patricia McConnell.