

SIT HAPPENS Tips & Techniques with Trudi Thorpe

Trudi Thorpe runs dogLOGIC Dog Training based in Sydney and specialises in Individual Behavioural Strategies, Puppy Pre-School and Adult Dog Classes. She is an AABP Professional Dog Trainer, Accredited Delta CGC Instructor, Accredited Delta CGC Assessor and a Certified Dog Behavioural Trainer. She is a member of the Delta Professional Dog Trainers Association, The Association of Animal Behaviour Professionals and the Association of Pet Dog Trainers.

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barrier as the other dog walks past. If that's not an option, turn around and walk back the way you came until you find a spot with enough

room to give you sufficient space. Try to keep your dog on a loose lead at all times as tension on the lead can increase the dog's anxiety levels. This is because a tight lead takes away all of the dog's options to move away, go forward or just stay still.

Stop taking him to outdoor cafes - He's not having fun! Reacting to other dogs walking by and snapping at people that are trying to pat him are both loud and clear tells that he is not comfortable in this situation - so why put him there in the first place. We wouldn't do it with our friends or family members - so why our dogs? Same goes with tying him up outside the newsagent and the butcher. The huge scene he is making is because he is distressed that you have left him in a public place and walked away from him. Strangers will probably try to pat him and there may be dogs walking along with their owners that want to meet him. He wants none of it so you need to listen to him. Reprimanding him will only increase his anxiety because he is not doing anything wrong, rather he is trying to let you know that he is not comfortable with the situation and you are not listening.

Sometimes it's more about us humans changing our expectations of our dogs, rather than 'making' them do something they're not comfortable with. Listen to your dog. Happy, content dogs don't growl or react so be aware of what your dog is trying to tell you.

Dear Trudi,

We have an 8 month old Miniature Dachshund that we are having some real issues with and I was hoping you may be able to help. He is absolutely fine at home and at the park off lead but when we take him out for a walk on lead, if he sees another dog he becomes really aggressive towards them. He barks and spins on the end of the lead and lunges toward them making a terrible racket and it has become really embarrassing. He does exactly the same thing if I take him to an outdoor café and another dog walks past - and if someone tries to pat him, he snaps at them. He makes a huge scene if I tie him up outside the newsagent just to duck in and grab the newspaper and does the same when I tie him up outside the butcher's, even though he can see me through the glass window. Every time he acts aggressively or even growls, I take action immediately and reprimand him sternly so that he knows that what he is doing is wrong but it just doesn't seem to make any difference at all! I can't understand why he is so aggressive when he knows that it is wrong to act and behave like this. So what can I do to stop him?

Thanks, **Damian McDermott**

Hi Damian,

In all of these scenarios, your Dog is actually loudly communicating to you AND the other parties around him that he is feeling uncomfortable, anxious and possibly even fearful. Aggression or reactivity in these situations usually means that your dog is out of his depth and he is over threshold ie. he can't cope. Trying to communicate with him at this point is useless because he is unable to function normally. Because dogs learn by repetition and association, your anxiety when you see another dog will inadvertently teach him to be anxious when he sees another dog and it escalates from there. Staying under your dog's threshold and not allowing him to rehearse that reactive behaviour when out on a walk is the most effective way to change that behaviour. This means that when you see another dog on a walk you should give you and your dog plenty of space from the other dog so that he doesn't feel the need to react. You can cross the road or even use parked cars as a visual

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