

Dog to Dog Socialization

The 3 C's

1. Learn to **control** your dog outside of her aggressive triggers. By control, I mean keep your dog calm and help her ignore distractions. If you can't control your dog when she is distracted or aroused by something pleasant, you won't be able to control her when she is distracted and upset by her trigger.
2. Maintain your dog's **calm** in face of her trigger. If you are using control to keep your dog calm before a trigger event, it will be easier to keep her calm through the trigger. If she is aroused before seeing her trigger, she is certain to "go off" and difficult to control.

To maintain calm: maintain the distance necessary for your dog; keep your dog under constant cue; use a firm but calm voice; firm but calm physical pressure around the head region; hold ears back if necessary. You are trying to keep your dog connected to you and so she doesn't get lost in her anxiety.

If you can keep your dog calm in front of her trigger, you:

- a. weaken the behavioral habit of acting aggressively
 - b. stop the perpetuation of the negative association with dogs. When your dog reacts it is stressful, which confirms to her that dogs are bad.
 - c. show her it is not her behavior that makes the dog go away or keeps her safe
3. **Cure** through counter conditioning. Meaning, make good things happen like cheese or chicken whenever your dog sees or interacts with another dog. This will establish a new positive association to dogs.

Steps 1 and 2 only suppress the aggressive behavior and allow you to calm your dog enough for Step 3. Making good stuff happen in the presence of, and during the interactions with, other dogs is going to change your dog's emotions about other dogs. If your dog is overly aroused, stressed or acting aggressively, your dog isn't going to be in the mood to kick back and enjoy some tasty cheese.

Self Control Homework

To build your dog's self control, and to establish yourself as her leader.

Leaders control. Leaders control behavior and access to things and places. The homework exercises below will help to establish control. Your dog needs to be accustomed to being controlled, so that it will be easier to control her when she sees dogs. Each week practice the control exercises given in class.

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Sit-Stay

- Put your dog in a **sit-stay** during an entire commercial break while sitting on the couch. Do not allow your dog to move or change positions. Every time she moves, get her back into a **sit** and ask her to **stay**. Keep your dog next to you to make it easier.
- Teach your dog that you watch and control her behavior, and that you always follow through.
- Practice **sit-stays** during more distracting activities, like talking on the phone, or paging through a magazine.

Back - boundary training

Use the **back** command to keep your dog out of a room or space you are in. Slowly add distractions in the room while you keep your dog back.

Start with an easy one. The first distraction might be you sitting down. Then a treat is on the floor, then a slowly moving ball, then a bouncing ball, etc. The boundary may be a narrow door threshold. Work up to a wider boundary.

Establish your stop-your-behavior sound or command. This could be **leave it**, **no**, **eh-eh**. Use your sound/word at the moment your dog looks like she is interested in the distraction. Confirm that your dog should stay back. Move calmly, and use your body language.

Reward your dog for staying back, but only if treats do not excite her to the point where she can't focus on her self-control exercise. Definitely reward her at the end of the exercise.

Steps to Introducing Your Dog To A Friend's Dog

Goal: To get your dog comfortable with a friend's non-aggressive dog

What is the first thing to do?

CONTROL exercises with BOTH dogs to create calm and controlled energy.

The friend's dog needs to be under CONTROL. Forward, friendly behavior is scary for your dog. Our class dogs are nervous 'social nerds'. It will go faster convincing them a calm dog (even if created) is trustworthy than an exuberant dog. As trust builds, the friend's dog's true character can be slowly revealed.

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We use **CONTROL** to establish deference from your dog and leadership from you.

Running your dog through strict control exercises helps to remind them that you control their decisions, you are confident and capable of control, so they are not as apt to “go off” the moment they get nervous.

Make the first exposure to the new dog easy and successful:

Expose your dog to the back-side (no eye contact) of a sitting dog, at a distance.

1) Have friend’s dog down the sidewalk a bit, sitting with back toward you, as you calmly walk your dog outside.

2) Then, turn neutral dog around. Feed your dog for looking. Let him acclimate.

3) Use Controlled Forward Movement to get a little closer. Stop. Acclimate/Feed. Repeat until you are at the closest distance your dog can handle.

4) Have friend’s dog walk away with backside to your dog. You follow at a distance. Let your dog do air-butt-sniffs, if he will.

Other interactions:

Because these ideas are social in nature, feed glances. Work up to feeding longer looks.

- Walk around each other in big arcs, maybe on opposite sides of street or in a big yard.
- Walk around willy-nilly (meandering is easier than straight-line approaching).
- Walk at each other but with the distance your dog can handle, and feed for the passing by.
- Walk at each other and sit, again stay at a distance that your dog can handle.

If this is all going well, develop harder social interactions:

- Controlled but-sniffs
- Parallel walking (dog human dog human)
- Sitting still together, still, but close. Try in yard, then inside (neutral dog goes in first)
- Body contact. Walk by each other in a manner where they might bump into one another (rear to rear or tail wagging into your dog). Mark and feed at the moment of contact and lure away.

Playing: Add arousal of friend’s dog, but use huge distance. Start with just freer movement.

End each session with them calmly together. Incorporate some massage. Let your dog relax.