

FEAR PERIODS & POSTURE



There are two periods where your dog will be sensitive to fear. The first occurs between 8 to 11 weeks old. This period is typically when puppies come home so it is important to be patient and allow slow introductions to kids, and other animals. The second occurs between 6 and 13 months. It is difficult for your dog to recover from things that produce a perception of fear within them during these fear periods. Therefore, it's important to not overwhelm your dog during these times. Always be sensitive to how your dog is reacting to a given situation. If your dog begins to lose confidence in behaviors that they seemed to have had no trouble with in the past, this may be a sign your dog is experiencing some sensitivity to fear. Some items to watch for during these times are: Loud noises (fireworks, yelling, etc.), physical force (never force your dog into position, or into a situation they are not comfortable with), end training in success this will help your dog develop confidence.

Handling Fearful Reactions

If your dog becomes tense, nervous, or frightened it is important not to soothe. This will only reinforce the fear reaction in your dog. Instead, you want to redirect your pup's attention onto a treat or toy. At this point you should calmly remove your pup from the situation that is causing the fear reaction. Once removed it is time to figure out how to introduce your puppy to this situation in a more productive way. For example, with people you want to introduce the puppy slowly. When introducing to strangers have the strange person give the dog a treat pay attention to your puppy the person may need to start by tossing treats to the dog from a distance. Please make sure that strangers NEVER pet your dog on top of their head. Strangers should always pet your dog under their mouth or shoulder area. Be sure your puppy is hungry for this exercise as this will increase the food drive in your dog giving them the extra motivation to venture closer to the stranger. It is important to understand that a dog in a state of fear is extremely stressed and pushing too hard/fast can lead to injury to the puppy or people.

Do: Be confident and secure in the people, places, and circumstances you expose your dog to.

Your dog is looking to you for leadership, if you are anxious your dog will pick up on that and experience anxiety as well. Your dog is always watching and picking up on your emotional and physical cues. For example, if you tense up on your leash while passing another dog this will tell your dog *"We need to be on alert, this could be dangerous"*. Remember, we are always communicating with our dog. Dogs communicate non-verbally most of the time. This is no different when they interact with humans, they are reading your body language and giving off their own non-verbal signals all the time.

Do Not: Bring your dog into a situation that you cannot be comfortable in. This goes back to the dog reading and following your cues. If you are not confident in a situation your dog will not be confident in that situation.

Do: Monitor/educate children about proper dog interaction.

Do Not: Leave small children alone with a dog. Children tend to behave in ways that will cause a fear reaction in dogs. Children love to run and play, dogs do too, dogs play with their teeth and claws which does not pair well with the soft skin of a child. A dog must be well socialized with children and have a strong bite inhibition, and the children must be educated in proper play with dogs before being allowed to run and play with a dog. NEVER ALLOW CHILDREN TO PLAY WITH A DOG UNSUPERVISED. One mistake could mean disaster for the dog and the child. Children see a cute dog and want to go up and hug and love that dog. This is dangerous with any dog but is extremely dangerous with an anxious or fearful dog. This situation puts the child's face right in line with the dog's teeth, in a situation where the dog will feel trapped and confined.

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Do Not: Loom over a dog. This can cause stress and anxiety. Can be perceived by your dog as intimidation.

Do: Pay attention to your dog's body language. The following are things to look for in your dog and what it may indicate:



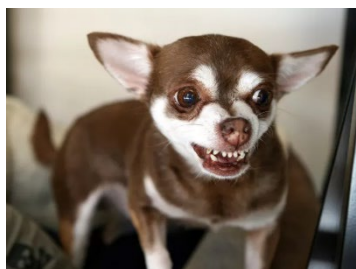
Stress Signals - these signals may indicate the dog needs a break from their current activity:

- Tail down
- Ears back
- Rapid panting with the corners of the mouth back
- A less obvious sign would be sweating through the pads
- Pupils dilated
- Lowered body posture



Alert - these signals show your dog is showing interest in something. This is sort of a wildcard, how the dog reacts next depends on how she reacts and perceives what they are interested in:

- Tail straight out
- Ears forward
- Mouth closed
- Stands tall on toes



Offensive Threat - this posture means the dog is aggressive and ready for attack. It is important to not use physical correction or anything that may cause pain; this will increase stress and may cause an attack. It is important to use rewards to regain the focus of the dog:

- Tail up and stiff
- Nose Wrinkled
- Ears forward
- Hackles up (hair standing up)
- Corners of mouth forward
- Stands tall and forward on toes



Defensive Threat - in this position your dog is being self-protective. The dog is showing fear and would love nothing more than to escape the situation.

- Tail tucked
- Ears back
- Pupils dilated
- Nose wrinkled
- Corners of the mouth back
- Body lowered
- Hackles up (hair standing up)



Relaxed Posture - these signs will show a lack of fear or anxiety which is what we are shooting for:

- Tail down
- Head high
- Corners of the mouth relaxed
- Ears up, but not forward