



Reactive Class

"In the Meantime..."

You have signed your dog up for Reactive class which is a few weeks away but, you need to do something about the behavior NOW. Below are some guidelines and information that will help get you through until your first class.

Whether your dog is reactive, leash-reactive, or dog and/or people aggressive, your first step is to manage your dog and prevent your dog from practicing the behavior (barking, lunging, pulling, growling etc.). That means whatever makes your dog 'crazy' doesn't get to be in your dog's life right now. The first and foremost step is avoidance and management. The more your dog barks, lunges, pulls, and growls at other dogs, people, and passerby's the more your dog thinks what he is doing is working. Your dog practicing this behavior day in and day out is going to make it more difficult to recondition. Have you ever tried to stop a bad habit? If you ask some smokers why they won't or can't quit, their response is something along the lines of, "it relaxes me when I'm stressed." Your dog feels almost the same way, he/she has reacted so long it's their solution to a stressful situation. They have practiced it for so long, it's the only thing they know to do, and they really think it works.

Here are some tips on avoidance and management to get your started:

- **Absolutely NO visits to pet stores, parks, DOG PARKS, other stores who allow dogs, the beach, vacation, visiting family/friends, hiking, biking, running, boating, camping, festivals, fairs, carnivals, dog-friendly cafes, breweries, wineries, and restaurants, dog events, dog holiday photos shoots, rescue group events, craft shows, or any other place you think your dog wants to go so he/she can be with you. They don't want to go; it's too stressful!!** There is an exception: if your dog already attends a day care or kennel and has not had any previous issues or problems at the kennel or day care, they can continue to attend.
- Limit access to windows/doors so they don't practice barking at things outside: Curtains, move furniture away so they can't perch, cover with cardboard/black garbage bags/wood etc., and baby gate access to areas with windows. You may also purchase window film at Home Depot or Lowes, but make sure you can't see through it.
- If your dog reacts to visitors at your house you have a few options: don't allow guests to your house; allow only guests your dog is acclimated to and has a positive, established relationship with; if a guest or service provider is unavoidable, provide an area far away from where the guest will be and place your dog in that area with a peanut butter/cheese/yogurt stuffed frozen Kong,

favorite toys, and water. You can also play music, like songs from “Through a Dog’s Ear,” play a book on tape, or turn on the TV with a sports program-like tennis or golf-or something that has a monotone speaker.

- No walks, or at least limit walks to NO distraction/extremely low distraction areas. If your neighborhood is full of your dog’s “enemies,” then do not walk him/her there! If you absolutely MUST walk, take LOTS of treats with you and do it when no one is outside or home. Consider the following:
 - Walk on a quiet trail in the woods, park, or other area.
 - Walk during low foot traffic times: early in the morning or late at night.
 - Provide alternative exercises, such as: chase a tennis ball up and down the stairs in your house, play tug, play hide-and-seek with your dog, etc.
- If you have a fenced-in yard, make sure you provide supervision, so your dog doesn’t practice the reactive behavior if he/she sees/hears other dogs or people, etc.
- If your neighbors have dogs that like to “fence fight” with your dog (run up and down the fence line barking and growling at each other), try to time your dog’s time outside when the other dog(s) is/are not outside. If, for some reason, your dog starts fence fighting or reacting to the neighbor’s dog(s), do not scream and yell or give the command to “come,” as it will likely be ignored. Silently, go outside and get your dog to bring him/her in the house.
- If you need to go to the vet or groomer, ask for an appointment first thing in the morning or at a time with the least number of appointments. Let the office staff know your dog is not OK with other dogs/people. Most veterinary offices have a good understanding of reactive dogs and will accommodate you. If you can get away with not going to the groomer before the start of class, that would be ideal. If not, explain your concerns with your groomer and see if he/she is willing to assist you with accommodations.
- This is not the time to try anything new...new places, new people, new animal “friends.” Just don’t do it.
- Holistic support like Anxitane, Zylkene, or CBD oil (Charlotte’s Web) can help take the edge off your dog’s anxiety and stress levels.
- There is no quick fix but there is help.
- Supervise, supervise, supervise! Do not leave your dog to his/her own devices!

Links:

<https://us.virbac.com/anxitane>

<https://www.vetquinolusa.com/content/zylkene>

<https://www.charlottesweb.com/all-charlottes-web-hemp-cbd-supplements/cbd-hemp-extract-for-dogs>

If you have any questions or need any additional information on any of the products I have recommended, please do not hesitate to contact me!

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Just a quick note about the first class: NO DOGS. This is a human-only class with lots of great info! It's a good idea to bring a notebook to take notes during the presentation. Also, when you arrive, please check-in with the receptionist and she will direct you where to go.