Pleased to Meet You
Focusing on Behavior to Better Serve Dogs and the Community

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Imagine that fabulous adopter (or one of your foster Rockstar’s) has a dog at home that's looking for a new canine friend. She brings the dog into the shelter for a meet-and-greet with one of your expert adoption staff.

Is your staff trained on how to conduct that introduction?

Beyond adoption or foster greets, how do you help dogs in your care that aren't candidates for group interactions?
In this session we'll discuss how to successfully introduce dogs on leash and how these introductions can build staff skills, use dog-dog interactions to improve dogs' skills and enhance their comfort with people, and utilize these interactions to learn more about your dogs and better support adopters and fosters.
Words to Live By

• Do no harm
• Gather information – Share information
• Set every dog and human up for success
• Be present and communicate throughout every interaction
• Be proactive.
• Give the dog agency. Try to let them make good choices.
What is Normal?

Dogs are individuals.

Know individual dog’s movements, vocalizations, skill level for greetings and behavior in differing environments and situations.
It’s fine to allow brief neck-over, mounting, and humping. However, I stop animals if one becomes excessive.
Self-limiting/Self-handicapping Behaviors
Look at the Whole Dog
I see a different picture here:

Ears are down and going back, mouth is closed, face is showing stress with skin looking tight. Eyes look worried.
Semi-feral dog at a distance:
This dog’s appearance would be very different if his comfort zone was invaded.
No Comfort Zone
The rear end of the dog is up, while the front end is down. The play bow often means “I want to play.”
Play bows can be seen at times right before a dog avoids having you come closer.

I slow down, or stop and turn.

If the dog wants a game of chase, he will solicit again.

If the dog is fearful, I hopefully helped to lessen the fear.
Tail wagging can mean many things:

- A low-hung wagging tail could mean, “I am scared or unsure.”

- A high, stiff wag can mean, “I am agitated, unsure or scared, but not submissive. I might bite you or your dog.” If the dog’s body is stiff, he is staring. Use caution. Keep the dog out of trouble — he may be about to make a bad decision.

- A loose wag — not really high or really low — normally means, “I am comfortable and friendly.” But you should keep watching if you are approaching some dogs who have a large personal-space requirement. They will tell you if you get too close.
A dog may freeze if she is scared, guarding, or feels cornered. She may bite, so please slow down.
Ears Perked Up
When a dog’s ears are forward, he is alert, interested in something.

Tail Between Legs
If the dog’s tail is tucked between her legs and her ears are back against her head, she is afraid, uncomfortable about something.
What do you see?
Tail tucked, ears back, body tension, tight lips, averted eyes.
Rolling over generally means the dog is saying, “I am not a threat.” But watch the whole dog.

If the tail and mouth are loose, the dog may be comfortable and asking for a belly rub.

If the tail is tucked and the lips are stiff, the dog may be scared.
“Tap Out”
Yawning in new or emotional situations
Panting
Shaking off after someone handles the dog or another dog plays too roughly.
Paw Raise
Licking lips even though the dog hasn’t been eating or drinking.
Scratching
Stretching out like a play bow, but not asking for play. Sometimes a greeting when a dog is insecure.
Making Themselves Smaller
Looking away as a person or another animal walks toward the dog.
Signs of Stress

- Starts to drool when she normally doesn’t
- Paces or circles
- Tucks his tail and moves away from something
- Starts to whine
- Sweats through her feet
- Puts his hackles up, his tail is low or high, and his body movement slows
- Starts to growl and moves away from something
  - Many people punish dogs for growling, which takes away a valuable form of communication.
- Starts to curl her lips
  - Sometimes this is all the warning a dog will give before biting.
- Starts to show his teeth
  - Again, the warning before biting can be brief, so try to remember every detail of what triggered the behavior so you can work on managing it.
- Dog may go still, dog may freeze, or dog may take action
The goal is to manage behavior while creating and implementing a plan to modify the behavior for a safer more comfortable future.

Stop whatever you are doing and try to determine what the dog was uncomfortable with/reacting to.

Often if we slow down exposure to whatever situation and object caused fear, and start exposing the dog in small amounts at a distance, we can help him to overcome his fear. We can also help dogs to become more comfortable in general, in order to keep them safe and to keep us safe.
Protect Your Puppies

Remember not all adult dogs are good or safe with puppies.
Dogs lacking play skills often mount and hump when excited. We can teach them how to play.
Some Challenges in Reading Body Language

- Coat type/condition
- Breed/mix
- Tail/ear docking
Other Factors to Consider

• Handicaps play into our perceptions as well as other animals’ perceptions
  – Deaf
  – Blind
  – Seizures
  – Diabetic
  – Amputee
  – Paralysis
• Some breed/mix characteristics
• Current and old injuries
Introductions
Check-in before introduction

Take a few minutes to introduce yourself to each dog and see how they’re doing before beginning dog introductions.
Introduction: Dog 1 and Black Dog

Black Dog:

• Tail goes high and stiff
• Stares into Dog 1’s eyes
• Hair on hackles went up and stayed up
• Growling
Black dog chose to walk away.
Questions?
Introduction: Dog 1 meets Buddy
Introduction: Daisy and Buddy
Introduction: Requested by Shelter
Check-in prior to introduction
Dog’s initial response
Growling
Closed Mouth
Staring
Weight Forward
Stiff Body
Tail up and stiff
Introduction attempt is ended
What is Normal?

Dogs are individuals.

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Parallel Walking
Check-in prior to any interaction

- Check the condition of the dog
- Observe current behavior
- Check physical condition
- Can he focus?
- Does he like my treats?
- What cues does he know?
- Am I comfortable working closely?

How are you doing?
Give Dogs Good Experiences To Build On

- Use front-clip harnesses, leashes, muzzles. (Tools shown at end of presentation.)
- Teach good leash walking skills.
- Improve good leash walking skills as handlers.
- Use fun ways to motivate and distract.
  - Use ourselves at tools: our happy voices, our tone, kissy sounds, etc.
  - Use treats, scents, toys, squeakers, wading pools, etc.
  - Use space, visual barriers; cars, bushes, trees, anything available.
Helpful Links

• LAT (Look At That)  https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/look-lat-dog-training-plan

• BAT (Behavior Adjustment Training)  https://www.training-your-dog-and-you.com/Behavior_Adjustment_Training.html
Parallel Walking

This is the distance that we used at the beginning of this introduction.
Comfortable distance
Discomfort – moving away
Make changes needed and plans
Suggestions

Start by using tools to get the animal to stop choking herself

- Front-clip harnesses
  - SENSE-ation®
  - Freedom
  - Halti
  - Easy Walk®
- Head Halters
  - Gentle Leader®
  - Halti

*Train just like muzzle training*
Types of Harnesses

- Easy Walk Harness
- Halti Harness
- SENSE-ation Harness
- Freedom Harness
https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/muzzle-training-dog-training-plan
Several approaches to loose leash walking

• Red Light/Green Light
• Penalty Yards
• Checking In
• Crazy Walking
• Click for Position
Walking With You

• Take animal to location with few or no distractions
  – Get them to focus on you with treats or toys
  – Step-and-treat, step-and-treat
    • Increase number of steps before next treat
    • If the animal is pulling, cue them back to you with a clicker, kissing noise or other verbal cues.
    • Continue step-and-treat