



Greater Androscoggin Humane Society

www.SavingPetsinMaine.org

Reducing Reactivity and Separation Anxiety in Dogs

Provided by Maria Ochs, GAHS Behavior Services Coordinator

Provide your dog with some “Me Time” during the day. Either crate, tether, or gate your dog in a separate room so they have down time away from you/your family. Contrary to what we as humans would think, it is not good to have your dog with you constantly - especially if you suddenly find yourself at home much more of the time. This should be done a few times a day, easily practiced while eating dinner, watching tv, doing dishes. Integrating this into your everyday routine will help build independence and confidence in your dog. *During this time, enrichment like frozen Kongs, Snuffle mats, feeder puzzles , even scatter feeding to preoccupy their time.*

Leave the house twice a day, in varied increments of time.

Provide enrichment for your dog (see above) and go for a walk, run a quick errand, check the mail or spend some time doing yard work. Remember to not enter your home if your dog is barking or whining as that will reinforce the behavior. Wait until he is calm, walk in, ignore him as you bring the mail in, groceries, etc. and then when in a calm state, say a quick hello with a pat on the head, tossing a treat, etc.

Always reinforce the calm by ignoring negative behaviors.

Acknowledgement of the undesired behavior (barking, nervousness, whining, jumping up, etc.) provides reinforcement, and the best way to combat that is to ignore everything undesirable your dog is doing but calmly reinforce everything you WANT your dog to do. (lying down, not jumping up, quiet behavior, etc.)

Work to remove obstacles to good behavior.

If your dog is showing territorial issues like aggressive barking at the window, barking when people come to the door, etc. you must remove that trigger by removing their ability to guard that spot. Such as, they are not allowed to approach the door when the doorbell rings, not allowed to sit at the window barking at people as they walk by, etc. When a dog is barking at the passerby and the person walks away, they believe in their minds that person leaves due to THEIR barking not simply due to the trigger continuing on. They think their barking worked! When a dog is allowed to rush the door, it gives them a feeling of control - they think that they are deciding who enters. Take the lead, tell your dog that this is OUR home and assure them that you will keep them safe.