



Common Causes for Lack of Training Success & New (or recurring) Behavior Problems

There are a handful of things that can greatly impact your training success or play a large role in creating and maintaining your dog's behavior problems. In many cases, more than one of the following things is part of the root cause of behavior and training problems.

Inappropriate Exercise – Be sure that your dog is getting the proper amount of physical and mental exercise. Even though your dog may LOOK like a teddy bear, they are actually a dog and they have physical and mental needs that need to be met in order to be a well-adjusted companion. No matter how small, how cute, or how furry, your pet truly is a dog and should be treated as such.

Leadership/Poor Relationship – If your dog doesn't respect you and look to you for guidance, problem behaviors can often spiral out of control. You need to learn how to be respectable and how to treat your dog in a respectful manner. Your relationship with your dog is arguably one of the most important aspects of training & fixing behavior problems.



Boredom – With our busy lifestyles, we often expect that we can come home from a long day of work and just sit on the couch and cuddle with our dogs. The problem is, they've been sitting around all day and now that you are home, they are ready to do something (ANYTHING!). Boredom is a very common cause for behavior problems. You can't really blame the dog for trying to find ways to entertain himself (like destroying your shoes) when you don't have the energy to play with him all week. It's important that we engage our dogs both mentally and physically to keep them from getting bored.

Poor follow through & consistency – If you get lazy with your leadership, rules and boundaries, you are likely to see regression with your dog's training or behavior problems. Following through with the proper rewards and consequences consistently will turn things around in no time.

Using rewards incorrectly – Having poor timing, or using motivators as a bribe instead of a reward will greatly impact your training progress.



Using punishment incorrectly – If you use punishment incorrectly, you can make your dog fearful of you. This will in turn create a dog that doesn't want to work with you because they are worried about what might happen next, therefore they just walk away when you ask for commands or refuse to come when called for fear of the unknown.

Anxiety – Anxious dogs struggle to learn & comply with behaviors too. Imagine trying to do a complex math problem on a roller coaster. It doesn't work very well. If you feel that you have an anxious dog, there are a few things you can do to help reduce anxiety. Anxious dogs like a regular and predictable schedule. When they know what to expect, the world is less worrisome. Improving your relationship with your dog can also be helpful and trying natural calming remedies such as essential oils or even calming wraps can help too. Physical and mental exercise also help to reduce anxiety by producing serotonin to counteract the anxiety as does doing lots of fun things your dog enjoys!

Fear – A fearful dog is going to struggle learning & complying with behaviors no matter what you do. In order to create better training success and fix behavior problems, we need to treat the cause... the fear. So determine what it is that your dog is fearful of and begin looking for ways to make that scary thing less scary. Approach from a long distance away and work your way closer at your dog's pace (for some dogs it may take days or weeks to get near something). You can also pair things your dog really loves (like treats) with the scary thing, but be sure to do so at a distance that your dog feels at ease enough to eat and enjoy the treats (fearful and anxious dogs often refuse treats when they are stressed).

Not enough training – Sometimes you just need more practice! As the saying goes... Practice makes perfect. Some dogs may learn something in 20 repetitions while others need 60 repetitions. If your dog doesn't seem to get it yet, don't give up. Keep trying and if it doesn't seem to be working, consider that anxiety or fear or one of the other elements listed here may be affecting the learning process.

Accidental reinforcement of the wrong behavior – Sometimes we make mistakes and accidentally reinforce behaviors that we don't actually want. Be sure that you are only rewarding behaviors that you want repeated!

Not changing YOUR behavior – Whether we like it or not, our behavior affects our dog's behavior, so if you decide that you don't want to make changes to our training style, lifestyle or consistency, your training will suffer as a result. Sometimes we need to change, in order for our dogs to change.