

The Animal Behaviour Consultants of Southern Africa (©[®]™)



FEBRUARY / MARCH 2012 NEWSLETTER

From The Editor

A warm welcome to all new (and not so new) ABC of SA members. I sincerely hope you all had a peaceful and safe Christmas and New Year.

ABC News

It is with great excitement that I am going to let the cat out of the bag and share with members the exciting news that the ABC is bringing out Dr Roger Mugford this year. His visit will coincide with the release of his newest book. Dr Mugford is famous for the "halti" and the "kong" and owns the "company of animals" who produce wonderful behavioral toys, many of which are available in South Africa. He is also famous (although he is not permitted to talk about them) for looking after the Queen's corgi's behavior! We are very thrilled indeed to be able to bring Dr Mugford over to SA and as soon as dates are finalised for talks and other events our members will be the first to know.

ABC Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the ABC of SA is to be held on the 29th March 2012. Please diarise this date. Remember if you do not attend you have no vote! If you don't vote – then you have lost of on any say in any ABC matters!! Formal notices to follow soon

FIVE TIPS FOR OWNERS OF FEARFUL OR SHY DOGS!

Taken from an article which appeared on British Better Dogs.

Dogs, like people, share variant personality types. Some are bold, some are friendly, some are 'quirky' and some are skittish. In this article we look at 5 tips that can help owners of shy, nervous or fearful dogs.

5) In situations where your dog shows fear towards strangers or visitors to them home, try and explain to visitors that you would prefer if simply ignored the dog completely, not even looking at the dog once or paying them the slightest bit of attention. Very often visitors feel the need to try and 'comfort' the dog and this can lead to the dog feeling even more threatened.

Once the dog has learned not to react at all to visitors, ask the occasional 'dog-knowledgeable' guest to nonchalantly and without any ceremony, simply drop a treat by the dog and then walk off in another direction. It is important they don't try and make a fuss of the dog or offer the treat from the hand. Doing this regularly with different guests will accustom the dog to the idea that all visitors are not intruders to the 'den' and they are not intent on causing harm to the dog or his pack.

4) Complimentary therapies and treatments can be very helpful for aiding nerves. Diet also plays an important role. If a dog is unusually nervous, listless, depressed or lacking coat condition a change of food may be in order. There are specialist dieticians and holistic vets who may be able to greatly increase your dog's physical and psychological well-being, thus improving the dog's confidence and reducing nervousness. Try the Internet or Yellow pages and look for holistic vets and animal dieticians.

3) Keep in your mind at all times how your body language impacts the shy or nervous dog. You are a very large creature with an ability to make all sorts of frightening noises (hoovers, washing machines, shouting at the TV). Imagine another creature that was the equivalent distance in size to what you are to a dog and you will have an appreciation of how the shy or nervous dog may see you. Now imagine that creature 'bearing' down on you with wide eyes, a booming voice and hands the size of saucepans on their way to touch your face. Frightening isn't it? Well, to a shy or nervous dog that can be how they see the world of humans and your body language can be interpreted wrongly by the dog.

The fact that you are so much bigger than him and the fact that people at large generally have a tendency to approach dogs from a standing position thus bearing down on them can make the world a scary place.

Always try and narrow the size difference with a nervous dog by getting down to their level. Avoid direct eye contact at all times, don't wear sunglasses (to a dog, they look like a pair of wide, staring eyes that never go away) and remember how the dog sees the world from different angles than you. Body language is vital in helping nervous dogs overcome their fears.

2) Make use of other dogs. Dogs, as a rule, will copy and emulate their canine counterparts. If you have a nervous dog it can be a wonderful experience for him or her to meet a carefully selected friend. Just one other dog to begin with.

Let them play, let them explore and the nervous dog will very soon begin to absorb the confidence of their bolder playmate and mimic their behaviour around people. It may take a while but regular 'play sessions' with other dogs can be the ultimate technique for curing many of the nervousness dog's hang-ups about life.

Ensure the play mate is well selected, is playful but not boisterous and has no aggressive tendencies. Don't, under any circumstances try and help a nervous dog by introducing them to an equally nervous playmate, it will double the problem. Meeting other dogs is a pastime best done socially where a 'screening' process can take place. Taking a nervous dog somewhere where there are likely to be lots of other dogs can be problematic. Explain your problems to friends, family, co-workers and be honest about your need to find a well-mannered, confident dog for yours to play with from time to time.

1) Consistency is a word used by all behaviour experts on a, well, consistent basis. Never is it more pertinent than in the case of the nervous or shy dog. You may be an erratic person, disorganised, impulsive, loud, prone to bad moods or shouting with none of these characteristics meant for the dog's consumption. However even the most ebullient of pooches will catch the vibes if something's 'up' in the household.

Ensuring stability, calm and an even tempered approach to home life will not only allow you to live longer and avoid an ulcer it will, above any other training tip or technique, help the more nervous of dogs to adjust to the world. Be patient, be calm, be understanding and be empathetic towards the dog's disposition.

Even if he or she has done something particularly naughty you must accept that there are certain ways to correct the problem that may work on 99.9% of dogs, even on dogs you have previously owned, but on THIS nervous or shy pet, the wrong response from you could literally kill their spirit.

Poisoned Cues: What Are They and Why Do We Need to Worry About Them?

By Rebecca Lynch

What is a cue?

A cue is any stimulus that precedes a behaviour and tells the dog to perform the behaviour. This stimulus can be anything that the animal can perceive: verbal, visual, a scent, a sound, a touch, or environmental. It can be trained; the word "sit" is a common verbal cue that means "put your rear on the ground". Or it can simply be learned from association; when I scrape the bottom of my ice cream bowl, my dogs perceive that as the cue to get up and make sad, starving dog faces so I will let them lick the bowl.

For the purpose of this article, I am going to focus on cues that we purposely teach our dogs.

When we teach our dogs using positive reinforcement, the dog learns a pattern. Cue -> Behaviour -> Reinforcement. Because of this chain of events, the cue in itself becomes reinforcing to the dog.

The dog learns that the cue is an opportunity to perform a behaviour and therefore, receive reinforcement.

Cues can then be used as the glue to hold complex behaviour chains together. In a behaviour chain, each cue that is given reinforces the behaviour that preceded it. The cue actually acts as a click! This is precisely how a freestyle team

can perform through an entire song without any primary reinforcement until the end of the routine. The reinforcement for each behaviour in the routine was the cue to do the next behaviour. So what does all of this have to do with a poisoned cue? First, let's define a poisoned cue.

What is a poisoned cue?

A poisoned cue is a cue that is no longer reinforcing for the dog. A cue can be, or become, poisoned for several reasons. Let's use the cue "sit" as an example:

* The cue could have been taught using a combination of punishment and rewards. If "sit" was taught using lure/reward or was captured with a marker (click), and then the dog was punished for not sitting, the cue would become poisoned. The cue could not be reinforcing as there would always be the worry of "will something good happen or will something bad happen?"

There is another side effect to training using a click to mark a behaviour and punishment to "correct" behaviour. In positive reinforcement training, the click becomes a reinforcer because it is paired so many times with a reward. Technically speaking, the click becomes a secondary reinforcer. The dog will have positive associations with the click. If we then introduce punishment into the training, the click will then be associated with the punishment and lose its power as a reinforcer. Suddenly, the click that was so clear and powerful becomes at the best ambiguous, and at the worst, a conditioned punisher.

* The cue may have been taught using positive methods but during the training of the cue, a punishing event occurred. Using our example, "sit", the behaviour could have been captured with a click and then rewarded with a treat. The cue is added, and we have cue (verbal "sit") -> behaviour (rear on floor) -> reinforcement (treat). This cue could then be poisoned if the owner decided to reward the dog with a pat on the head. If the dog does not like a pat on the head, it is not reinforcing for the dog. A pat on the head could actually be an aversive for the dog. Soon the dog will avoid sitting in order to avoid the possibility of a pat on the head.

* A cue could become poisoned if a punishing event is associated even one time with the cue. Perhaps you are cooking and ask your dog to "sit". A frying pan falls from your hand and crashes to the floor and startles your dog. From now on, "sit" may be a poisoned cue for your dog.

Why Do We Need To Worry About Poisoned Cues?

As you can see from the examples above, a cue can become poisoned very easily. Anything aversive associated with the cue can poison the cue, and the cue can be poisoned after just one exposure to the aversive. One thing we must keep in mind is that **what we consider an aversive and what the dog perceives as an aversive may be two entirely different things.**

We humans may think that a pat on the head is a reward while the dog is cringing at the thought of it. In other words, it can be very easy to poison a cue.

As owners, we need to be very cognizant about our interactions with our dogs. Are we patting our dog's head when he doesn't like it? Are we punctuating the cue with a slight tug on the leash? Even the slightest tug can be seen as an aversive to some dogs. Watch your dog's body language as you interact with him. If you pat your dog's head, is he squinting and pulling back or pushing his head into your hand?

As dog behaviourists / trainers, not only do we need to teach owners how to watch their dog's body language, but we also need to watch the dog's body language as cues are being introduced during training. Unfortunately, we trainers all know that the dogs that come to us for training are rarely a blank slate. They may be arriving with a whole set of poisoned cues. It is our job to observe body language as the cues are introduced to see if they have already been poisoned. Was training going smoothly until the cue was introduced? Is the dog suddenly offering calming signals or displacement behaviours? Did the dog suddenly walk away from training? It is a good idea to have the owner list cues that the dog has been taught before you begin training with the dog. This is especially important for a crossover dog or a dog that has been adopted without any knowledge of prior training.

Those dog trainers who participate in competitions with your dog should also be on the lookout for poisoned cues. If a poisoned cue makes its way into a freestyle routine, that will be a very weak or broken link in a very long behaviour chain. If a dog is falling apart in the obedience ring, is a poisoned cue to blame?

Poisoned cues come in many forms.

Unfortunately, any cue can become poisoned. A good example of a poisoned cue that you may not have considered is a dog's name. I had a client once with a young puppy named Sammy. During one of my visits to Sammy's house, I was working with his owners on teaching him to give eye contact when they said his name. We started by clicking and

rewarding for offered eye contact. Sammy was engaged and enjoying the training session. I then asked his owners to say his name and click when he looked at them. The moment they said "Sammy", the poor puppy tucked his tail, ducked his head, ran and hid under the couch. I later found out that the owners had often punished Sammy and would yell, "SAMMY! NO!!!!" The owners had not realized that poor Sammy was associating his name with punishment.

An example of an unusual poisoned cue occurred with my own dog, Karma. Karma had been training for search and rescue. She was progressing quite well with her training as an area search dog. Suddenly, Karma's performance began to drop off. She would come within 10' of locating the "victim" and then begin offering displacement behaviours. Her reward for finding the hidden person was a game of tug that she had dearly enjoyed, but she suddenly began to squint, cringe and scream when the tug was presented. We immediately discontinued the use of the tug and I took her to the vet for a full physical work up. I was worried that she had an abscessed tooth or some other injury that would cause her to fear the tug.

A few training sessions later, I discovered the cause of the problem as I watched another team member reward his dog with a tug. This handler would slap his boot or his leg with the tug to tease the dog and get it riled up, then slap the sides of the dog's head before giving it the tug. For his dogs it was like pouring gas on a fire. It got them cranked. I had not known that he had tried rewarding my dog in this way. Karma is a very soft dog and could not tolerate a slap near the face. Once was enough for her to be forever fearful of tugs. Unfortunately, not only was she fearful of tugs, she was also fearful of the phrase, "Good dog", as she was told that while she was being slapped on the side of the face. Even two years later, if I say "good dog" with my hand or any other object near her head, she will cringe and cry out.

This is a good example of a behaviour chain that fell apart because of a poisoned cue. The chain is: "go find" (cue) -> search (behaviour) -> perceive scent (cue) -> follow scent (behaviour) -> locate victim (cue) -> bark (behaviour) -> play tug (reward). Karma would perform the chain almost all the way until the end of following the scent, at which point she would begin offering displacement behaviours because locating the victim had become a poisoned cue. One slap on the side of the face, which was rewarding for other dogs, had unravelled two years of training.

What do we do about a poisoned cue?

Now that I have you worried and looking for poisoned cues around every corner, I have some good news. Poisoned cues are fairly easy to fix. All you have to do is re-capture or re-shape the behaviour and add a new cue. It is very important to actually re-teach the behaviour, as you cannot just transfer a poisoned cue to a new cue. Unfortunately, if you try to transfer a poisoned cue, all the baggage of the poisoned cue gets transferred along to the new cue. So it's best to not try to cut corners. Don't worry; your dog will remember the behaviour, so reshaping will most likely happen pretty fast. Add that new cue and rest easy knowing that you have put your dog at ease by throwing out that poisoned cue.

Cats – and the "Funny Half Hour".

By Louise Thompson

Accredited Animal Behaviour Consultant

It has been given lots of names like "midnight madness" and "funny half hour". Cats can suddenly go into a frenzied energy burst – flying up and down curtains, up, on and away, nothing stands in their way! So lock up your bone china – the cats are out to play!

It is quite remarkable just how inventive a cat can be when utilising our furniture and household environment as their own personal jungle gym! Often this wild behaviour is accompanied by vocalisations, hisses and meows of delight and pure excitement.

The "funny half hour" often seems to have "stops and starts" and various things can set them off again. It is also interesting to note that this behaviour is more commonly seen late in the evening. For this reason, some people have named it "midnight madness"!

This syndrome seems to affect most cats at some stage or other but indoor cats seem to be more prone to this behaviour than those who are able to roam outdoors. It could be simply about expending energy - which is a little more challenging for indoor cats.

Outdoor cats use a huge amount of energy climbing trees, walls and other obstacles, and of course outdoor cats are enjoying honing their hunting skills. Indoor cats adapt and use what they have on hand to practice their hunting skills – stalking and pouncing on whatever passes by. They often wriggle their back legs and prepare to pounce on imaginary prey.

A cat looking for interaction from another cat during these times can become highly excited (adrenalin driven games) which can spill over into a fight, but thankfully it is usually of short duration.

All of the above are considered to be well within the bounds of normal and expected cat behaviour.

Bipolar Disorders in Dogs???

Interesting Article (would love your input!) *Bipolar disorder is a hyper depression disorder stage and can be experience either by cats, dogs or even humans. It involves a psychiatric analysis as the person/dog/cat going through this disorder will experience unusually high energy levels along extreme mood swings which can be anywhere between enthusiasm to hyper depression. This is an intricate sickness which involves sever different warning signs. But the most important amongst the warning signs in this disorder are random changes in the mood which can be anywhere from hyperactive to mania and can go up to hyper depression. The different types of bipolar disorders in dogs vary from meek to brutal.*

- **Bipolar Disorder Stage I:** The symptoms when your dog exhibits enthusiastic behavior includes extreme contentment, pleasure, bad temper (vice-versa), high energy levels, sleeplessness, etc.
- **Bipolar Disorder Stage II:** The symptoms when your dog exhibits a depressed behavior includes feeling low accompanied by constant crying and howling, less energy drive, loss of interest toward food, weight loss/gain, tends to sleep more than what he was before and in worst cases include even suicidal feelings.

The Bipolar behavior in dogs: In most of the cases it is seen that you will find your dog all of sudden behaving aggressively to you. The nature of your dog would have been to obey your orders before, but during this sickness there are chances that he may not want to listen to you or try to bark at your constantly while in worst cases would end up biting their own master. The other change to be observed in your pet dog is if they are lacking interest in hearing to you or anything else like their favorite activities. Do keep a track as to when they get aggressive or saddened, at what levels.

Conflicting Judgments: The sudden violence from your pet without any aggravation from your side can be a little disheartening to you being the owner of the dog. It is just that their brain cells do tend to act a little weird and this makes them behave so. Some expert dog coaches even believe that not all dogs with aggressive behavior have bipolar disorder; their violent behavior can be a result of just agony or fear of loosing their personal things or fear of other people/animals, etc. However, caution, has to be taken while approaching dogs with bipolar disorder issues as no one can predict what exactly their mood is during the moment. For one instance they might be quite happily playing with you and the next instant they might tend to bite you.

Treatment: Animal activists, veterinary doctors and dog owner till date tend to oppose on both the origin and the medication of the dogs with violent behaviors. However, in recent times it has been found that dogs with bipolar disorder when given proper medications along with behavioral coaching classes from professional dog trainers have improved on a way higher note.

Facebook Group News

This is proving to be a more and more popular discussion forum with now well over 230 group members from many parts of the world. Discussions have been varied and some really valuable input, information and advice has been received from pet owners seeking advice and behaviorists working in the field. I would like to thank everyone who has posted on this forum for their input and support. I hope it continues to grow from strength to strength

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION'S DUE - REMINDER:

I recently did send out invoices/statements for the 2012 ABC membership fees. Please give me a shout if any member did not receive one, as usual lots of mails "bounced back".

ADVERTISING IN OUR NEWSLETTER

If you want to place a classified advertisement in the ABC Newsletter please contact Louise at louthomp@mweb.co.za
All proceeds go to The NDDF The Dog and Donkey Foundation. This organization conducts sterilization's, and provides veterinary care in the poorest areas from Gauging to Namaqualand!
A worthy cause indeed. Thanks to the two first contributors below!

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Behavior Adjustment Training (B.A.T.)

Done right, BAT is like a miracle. I actually have gotten goosebumps at the end of a session. Behavior Adjustment Training, or BAT, uses environmental consequences to reward socially acceptable choices. In a nutshell, **BAT gives the dogs a chance to learn to control their environment through peaceful means.** It's very empowering to the dog, in a good way.

BAT uses functional and bonus rewards, combined with clicker training and systematic desensitization to help dogs make better choices in an error-free way.

The things that you find obnoxious or scary (barking & lunging, for example) serve a purpose for the dog. That is the idea behind what behavior researchers call **Functional Analysis**. Imagine you hated your high-stress job but loved the pay. It leaves you exhausted and panting, but you enjoy the reward at the end of it. Given the chance to earn your same great paycheck by doing something easier that you liked more, wouldn't you do it?

BAT is similar to a method used with humans, called Functional Communication Training. Students learn to communicate their needs instead of using aggression or other problem behavior. Sound familiar?

Functional Communication Training, used with children with developmental disabilities, is one of the inspirations for BAT, along with the best parts of clicker training, systematic desensitization, Constructional Aggression Treatment, the Two-Reward method, Treat & Retreat, click and retreat by Alexandra Kurland, and more. Functional rewards can fall into the quadrant of positive reinforcement (like 'real life rewards') and negative reinforcement (like relief from social contact). The upcoming book on BAT goes into that in more detail.

Click on the bold brown letters (right) to see the video ([See transcript of video here- it helps!](#))

Functional rewards are not just for aggression or fear, but eliminating distress that leads to reactivity (including frustration, anger, and fear) is the main thrust of BAT. BAT uses Differential Reinforcement of Alternate behaviors (DRA) with environmental rewards: the ones the dog is already working to get. BAT also uses 'Bonus Rewards' when necessary for motivation – food, toys, etc. **The key to BAT working quickly is low stress, never leaving the dog in the 'deep end of the pool' or punishing them for incorrect choices.**

First, **here's why I'm calling it BAT. The goal is a well-adjusted dog and behavior is all we're really trying to adjust.** When you're done, you have the same trigger as before, and the same consequence, but a new behavior. The core idea that I love from Functional Analysis is the idea of **using the reward that the dog is working to earn** to reinforce a new, more 'appropriate' replacement behavior. So if the dog is already getting paid for barking at the mailman by having him leave, the new set-up is to pay the dog for calm behavior by having a pseudo-mailman leave as a consequence for good behavior.

With the Antecedent -> Behavior -> Consequence model, you have something like: Antecedent -> Behavior 1 -> Consequence being replaced by Antecedent -> Behavior 2 -> Consequence (Think of 'antecedent' as a cue or something that signals the behavior is about to be paid for.) So Mailman arrives -> Barking -> Mailman leaves is replaced by Mailman arrives -> dog turns away -> Mailman leaves I love that part. It means that **the environment itself, which created the problem, will now start rewarding your dog.**

You will need to have several friends practice being the mailman before it works for real. The bigger picture of BAT is that it includes real-world **positive reinforcement**, too: Mom comes home -> jumping -> petting/attention is replaced by Mom comes home -> sitting -> petting/attention Not that that's new, but I love that the BAT model fits in with what we already do! The **behavior is what we adjust, within the environment that provides the antecedent and consequence. That's why I've called it Behavior Adjustment Training.**

Now to get that behavior change, we have to make sure that either Behavior 1 -> Consequence is a chain that gets broken, as we do when we ignore jumping, or we work on more errorless learning. What I mean by that is that we start with an antecedent that is different enough from the usual antecedent that the dog doesn't do the naughty Behavior 1. It gradually morphs over time until the picture becomes Antecedent -> Behavior 2 -> Consequence, as we wanted. Mailman really, really far away -> dog turns away -> Mailman leaves ... Mailman really far away -> dog turns away -> Mailman leaves ...and so on, until we have Mailman arrives -> dog turns away -> Mailman leaves

In that example, the dog is still getting rid of the mailman. With reactivity to strangers or other dogs, the idea is that the dog learns that it's safe to approach. Curiosity can blossom, which then leads to trust and sociability. For example, my dog who was afraid of people now leans in for petting from strangers, because he learned that he could just walk away when he felt a little nervous.

Here is the BAT protocol for aggression or fear in its simplest form.

Expose: Start sub-threshold and remain below the dog's threshold as you increase stimulus intensity a little (e.g. student dog moves closer to stooge (a.k.a. helper/decoy/actor), stooge moves closer, or both). If dog is getting worse instead of better, abort.

Wait for or manufacture acceptable alternative behavior in a non-aversive way. Be sure to take very small behaviors, like blinks or head turns. Waiting is preferred, whenever possible.

Mark using a verbal Yes or a clicker.

Functional Reward: Decrease stimulus intensity (but not to zero). ex. Student gets to walk 20 feet away, but stooge remains in view.

(Optional) Give a treat or toy as a **Bonus Reward** (best to use on Walks, not usually necessary or desired for set-ups).

This need not be a big, long set-up. It can just be a single repetition, in the middle of doing something else, like TTouch ground work or passing by a gardener in front of her home. Whenever the dog is in a slightly stressful situation and they do a nice appropriate signal (instead of aggression) you could mark with "Yes" and retreat with them as the reward.

What's very cool about BAT for reactivity is that the dog starts to actually become friendly to the decoy, even though all they wanted, at the beginning, was more distance. It's as if they now have the locus of control and the world makes sense again. Their peaceful choices are controlling their environment, and having an internal Locus of Control feels good!

Unlike counterconditioning, which assumes that emotions drive behavior, BAT acknowledges the theory that behavior and its consequences can also drive emotions. I think both are probably true, so I use both CC/DS and BAT, in combination or in different circumstances. **Key points to remember when doing BAT for aggression or fear:**

Above all, stay sub-threshold. Take frequent breaks, especially when the dog asks for them.

If the dog becomes agitated (breathing heavier, looks like he might have an outburst), interrupt the dog or counter command (give the cue for an easy incompatible behavior) and then decrease the stimulus intensity (for example, walk away from the decoy or have them go away, whichever is least reinforcing). If the dog has an outburst and you just stand there, you're wasting time, because he's more sensitive to the stimulus for your next trials, and the rate of reinforcement goes way down. Barking/lunging is also hard on everybody else's stress level, including the stooge and the student dog's owner.

Shape for a nice big set of clear cut-off signals. **Don't go for variety too soon.** The student dog (or horse or goat person or whatever) should experience rapid success. You can repeat this later to look for variety. Replacement behaviors include: blinking, jaw loosening (being able to pant again), looking away, turning away, ground sniffing, air sniffing, tail carriage getting looser.

Reinforce calmly gathering information with allowing the dog to continue doing so, or with quiet praise.

I really like having the student dog able to move, rather than being tethered, and able to walk away from the situation (safely leashed or behind a barrier, but not tethered to a wall). If the student requests a break by checking out, she gets one.

Dogs should have control of their exposure to the trigger during the session (your job is often just to keep them from getting so close that they go over threshold).

For most dogs, especially fearful dogs, **I prefer for them to retreat from the Scary Monster as their reward** when they've done an acceptable alternative behavior, versus only having the monster leave. Fear is the emotion of 'get me out of here!' so it makes more sense to me that the student dog gets to leave versus chasing off the bad guy. You do need to have trials where the stooge approaches and retreats, but I think the bigger reward for a fearful dog is being able to leave. So even if the stooge approaches the student dog, the student dog still walks away as the reward, simultaneously or just after the other dog leaves. Even dogs who are offensively aggressive (angry, territorial, whatever you want to call it) benefit from learning how to just walk away. Lateral/tangential retreats work well for them, at first.

If the student dog barks on retreat, continue to retreat, but remember that next time you'll need to tone down the stimulus (a bit farther away, less motion or whatever).

It is totally reasonable to pre-train some of these behaviors via clicker training without the decoy there.

What about regular walks between BAT sessions? Any time you encounter triggers that will hold still (dogs behind fences, people out gardening, etc.), you can do BAT by approaching and retreating based on the dog's behavior.

On walks where you don't control the triggers, follow the steps on [this handout](#). **The core of BAT is simply that you use environmental rewards when you can, to change A -> B1 -> C to A -> B2 -> C.** When you can't use environmental rewards, at least give the dog a chance to earn reward somehow, even by just looking at the trigger!

You don't need to do a marathon session to complete switchover (where you can tell trust has built and the dog is seeking social contact), although you can.

The first session of BAT may take a long time to switchover (the point where the dog wants to be near the stooge versus only leaving), the second will take less time, and so on.

Eventually it's like the real world, with no time to switchover. That's how you know the dog has been rehabilitated (assuming it's a generalized response).

If you don't get to switchover in the first session, that's fine. Just try to end each session with some down-time, hanging out at whatever distance feels comfortable to the dog. You can use the same stooge again and work up to socializing with them, unless that's not safe.

Remember that **we're teaching new skills to negotiate with the Scary Monster**, so the first several times that you do this will take more time than, say, counterconditioning, or simply parallel walking. But as I said before, the time-to-switchover shrinks rapidly. And now the dog has a new set of skills.

This involves some negative reinforcement, because 'relief' is the treat. While I would never apply pain in order to remove it, this kind of negative reinforcement is very natural, and done right, need not be too aversive, and we need not apply anything aversive to the dog in order to take it away as a reward.

In many cases, their own species is the unwanted stimulus and in most cases, they are walking themselves up to the approach line. They will be exposed to other dogs all the time anyway. They are already learning behaviors anyway. We are just teaching them different behaviors, using their natural environment.

The marker signal of "yes" becomes a classically conditioned safety cue for the dog, because it has signaled the end of a trial and a retreat.

More about B.A.T. in our next issue.

*Grisha Stewart, MA, CPDT, CTP <http://doggiezen.com/bat> <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/functionalrewards>
BAT uses functional and bonus rewards with systematic desensitization in an error-free approach to learning.
BAT reduces fear and aggression by giving dogs socially acceptable ways to communicate their needs.*

THATS ALL FOR NOW FOLKS.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any news, views ideas or articles.

All comments and feedback and discussion very welcome

Cheers for now

Lou

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