

## Catch a Glance, Teach your dog a polite passive response

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A glance, ear twitch, wag of a tail, etc. are acceptable and reasonable passive responses. Lunging towards, barking, growling, pulling, etc. are all active inappropriate responses. With training and practice it is possible to condition your dog that great things come from you when distractions or stimulating items are present. This will reduce the value of the distractions and increase your value. In turn this will reduce the dog's active inappropriate responses.

Remember Newton's Law? Reacting by trying to stop or correct reaction often backfires and stimulates a stronger reaction. The dog may begin to associate the situation or stimulus that caused the arousal with correction and thus gets more anxious and even more aroused.

### The Exercise:

- It is important to set up your training with as much control of the environment as possible.
- Always work within your dogs learning threshold. This means your dog must be relaxed, able to respond to you and eat treats.
- Determine at what distance your dog begins to react to the stimulus or distraction you are working with. Start a few feet further away.
- Perform this exercise without walking towards any stimulus/distraction item. Walk parallel to the distraction. If the item is moving towards your dog or your dog is moving toward it the level of difficulty is extremely increased.

Observe your dog carefully watching for the first indication that your dog is aware the stimulus or distraction item exists. This may be an ear twitch, shifting of eyes, slight change of tail position etc. Mark (with clicker or trained verbal marker) and reward this passive response. Be sure to reward your dog as he looks back to you in response to your marker and not while still looking at the item. If he/she does not look back to you after you give your marker you are too close. Repeat several times.

As your dog begins to pay more attention to you than the item you may gradually reduce the distance between your dog and the stimulus/distraction item. If at any time the dog responds actively increase the distance.

Practice in a variety of settings with a variety of distractions. Once this game is fully trained praise should be given for passive behavior in the face of distractions.

### Items needed:

- ✓ Treats
- ✓ Clicker (or use a trained marker word)

### Basic Instructions:

- ✓ When the dog looks at something, it gets a click and a treat. When the dog looks back at the item, repeat. This is a fast game (you will give a lot of treats).
- ✓ If the dog stares at the item and refuses to look at you, then more distance between the stimulus item and the dog is needed.
- ✓ If the dog is already reacting, then the dog is too close.
- ✓ Only play the game for a few minutes at a time.
- ✓ Only proceed closer to the item when the dog displays a Conditioned Emotional Response (i.e., looks at item, looks back at owner for treat). This is often called the "Whiplash Turn" since the dog will eventually look at something and turn quickly back to look at the owner for a cookie (the desired behavior).

### When to use:

- ✓ During class, when your dog barks at other dogs.
- ✓ While walking – barking at strangers, cars or other items.
- ✓ While in the car – barking at other cars (this will require a driver).
- ✓ Anytime a dog is being reactive.