

Understanding Resource Guarding

- Managing the environment
- Essential replacement behaviors
- 4 types of guarding
- Dog-on-Human guarding behavior
- Dog-on-Dog guarding behavior
- Successful progression

MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT

- Knowing the triggers
 - Dogs can guard many different things for many different reasons. Knowing your dog is the first step to successfully controlling the situation.
 - Food/Toys/People/Other animals/Bed/Space/Inappropriate items/etc. are all examples of things your dog may guard.
- Management
 - If your dog guards his ball, for example, don't leave the ball out with the dog when other dogs or people are around.
 - Have control of toys during play time, have control of food during mealtime, and control your space and the space of others.
 - Teach your dog commands and behaviors to practice as a replacement for guarding behavior.
- Emotional state
 - Dogs are more likely to exhibit guarding behavior when they feel threatened.
 - If one dog is constantly bullied by another dog or human, they may start developing guarding behaviors to protect what they want to keep. Alternatively, if the dog is used to being the bully over another person or dog, they may continue that behavior around new dogs/people as well.
 - Never punish a dog for resource guarding. If your dog is guarding because they feel threatened THEN they get in trouble, their emotional state will become more extreme.
 - Try keeping dogs calm and happy in situations where you may notice guarding behavior and teach positive replacement behaviors.
- Understanding the dog's threshold
 - Often, dog's will only exhibit guarding behavior in certain situations.
 - Don't push the dog past the threshold. Doing this sets the dog up for failure and allows the dog to practice the behavior.
 - Your goal is to never put your dog in a situation that is so stressful for them that they feel like they need to defend themselves.
 - Understand your dog's stress signals. Growling and biting are very extreme signals, watch for more subtle forms of communication. Learning how to read body language is the FIRST step to working through problem behaviors. If your understanding of dog body language is limited, ask a professional for help.
 - Once you have found the dog's threshold, work on positive training methods to teach your dog that this is not a stressful situation.



These materials are provided for you as a way to review behaviors previously discussed in training sessions. It is important for the success of both you and your dog, that these materials are used for reviewing, not for teaching. Do not skip ahead, even if you think your dog is ready. Every dog, every owner, and every situation is specific and requires a training program catered to fit; because these handouts are very general, please talk to Kelsey before attempting any of these training techniques on your own.



ESSENTIAL REPLACEMENT BEHAVIORS

- Leave It
 - Change of focus command. Dog should “leave” distraction alone and focus back on you.
 - Always reward the dog’s focus.
- Stay
 - Remaining in one place in one position until released.
 - You can reward the dog for maintaining a “stay” as well as for releasing from it.
- Go To Spot
 - A bed/crate/rug/room/etc. where your dog can be sent.
 - This is never a punishment spot, always reward for going to this spot.
 - Really make it a fun place to be with meals, toys, and treats.
 - Use this spot often, not just when your dog is being naughty.
- Drop It
 - Spitting an item out of their mouth.
 - Different than leave it!
 - Always have something to trade for the item in their mouth. Make sure your trade in value is equal to or greater than the item they already have.
- Come
 - Coming straight to you and checking in.
 - Always reward when your dog comes to you and make sure to use this command in positive situations.
 - Refer to Recall Games.
- All of these replacement behaviors should be used on both the “guarding dog” and the “approaching dog”.
 - All dogs need to be responsible for the same tasks whether they seem to be the one causing the problem or not.

4 TYPES OF GUARDING

- Guarding Items
 - Anything your dog can put in his mouth or stand over. Might be a dog appropriate item like a bone/toy/chew, an inappropriate item like a tissue/shoe/sock, or a previously neutral item like a pinecone/stick/cat poop.
- Guarding Food
 - Typically refers to food bowl, but also food producing toys or human food.
- Guarding Your Space
 - When the dog is near the human and shows guarding behavior when another animal or human approaches your “bubble”.
- Guarding Their Space
 - When the dog is not near the human (typically relaxing) and another animal or human approaches the dog. Usually occurs on dog bed/in crate/ in dog’s favorite couch spot/ etc.



DOG-ON-HUMAN GUARDING BEHAVIOR

- Early exposure
 - If you have a puppy, you can work on eliminating resource guarding from the beginning.
 - Sit near the food bowl when you feed your puppy/Hand feed the kibble at meal time/pet the puppy during mealtime or when playing with toys/play games involving toys like fetch and tug/teach essential replacement behaviors.
 - If at any point your puppy is showing guarding behavior, back track and work on replacement behaviors and counterconditioning.
- Don't pass your dog's threshold
 - Remember, it's your goal it never put your dog in a situation that is so stressful for them that they feel like they need to defend themselves.
- Reward your dog when you approach them.
 - Toss treats towards your dog every time you approach when they are in a situation where they may guard.
 - Staying outside of your dog's threshold, repeat this exercise over and over until you can start getting closer and closer without your dog showing a stress signal.
 - Your dog should respond excitedly when you approach before you begin moving closer.
- Always "trade up"
 - Do not take things from your dog (even inappropriate items), unless you can trade them for something THEY find more valuable. Imagine how you would feel if someone was constantly stealing your stuff. Do not steal -trade!
- Teach them how to work for it!
 - No Free Lunch Policy
 - Everything that the dog gets should be earned (food, attention, treats, access to your space, furniture, outside time, walks, etc)
 - Teaching the dog how to earn access to things helps build confidence and trust.

DOG-ON-DOG GUARDING BEHAVIOR

- Make sure all dogs that come into contact with your dog are respectful and can follow your rules.
- Don't expose your dog to other dogs that will trigger the guarding behavior
 - Ex. Really pushy dogs or young puppies
- Manage the environment by removing items that are worth guarding or limiting the dogs' exposure to one another during situations that trigger guarding behavior.
 - Ex. Don't sit on the couch with both dogs if one dog guards your space.
- Use the Name Game
 - Put both dogs in a sit (down, go to spot, etc.), say one dog's name then feed that dog a treat. Immediately after, say the other dog's name then feed that dog a treat.
 - Go back and forth and switch up the order so the dog's start learning that "I only have access to the treat if my name is called first".
 - Use the Name Game with treats, meals, attention, going outside, or whatever else is a resource for them.



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- Tether the dogs or use multiple handlers, if needed, to provide safety.
- Remember your dog's threshold. Make sure the other dog is not too close when practicing.
- Teach guarding dogs how to accept other dogs in their space, and teach other dogs not to approach a guarding dog.
 - With two people, leash both the Approaching Dog (AD) and the Guarding Dog (GD)
 - Treat the GD whenever they notice the AD and don't react (the required distance for this to be successful is based on the threshold of the GD).
 - Treat the AD whenever they disengage from the GD or the GD's resource.
 - With practice, the GD should be able to ignore the AD when they approach and remain in a calm relaxed state. The AD should be able to ignore the GD and find replacement behaviors to focus on instead.
 - Work on slowly moving the threshold closer and closer to the GD.
 - This exercise takes many repetitions over a long period of time. Go in baby steps so the dogs are both set up for success.
 - Always watch the dog's body language! There are many subtle stress signals that you need to be aware of in order to practice this exercise successfully.
 - Keep training safe and positive.

SUCCESSFUL PROGRESSION

- Because resource guarding is a reflection of the dog's emotional state, you cannot move forward until the dog feels more confident and learns to relax.
- Teaching your dog additional replacement behaviors will help keep their mind busy and prevent fixated behavior.
- Gradually work on moving the threshold line but do not push your dog too far too fast.
- Look for progress not perfection.
 - Many dogs will have guarding tendencies their whole life, but we can work on making the guarding behavior safer and less severe.
 - Always manage the situation, do not assume that your dog will not guard a resource; even if they have not guarded that resource before, or they have not guarded it in a long time.
- Make every experience positive.
 - Training should be fun and motivational!

Please contact Kelsey with any questions, comments, or concerns!! Congratulations on helping your pup become Pawsitively Trained!

Kelsey@PawsitivelyTrainedDogs.com (916) 899-9637



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